

Speech

by

M. W. Campbell

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House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT

SPEECH

OF

MR. M. N. CAMPBELL

MEMBER FOR MACKENZIE

ON



THE HUDSON BAY RAILWAY

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 16, 1924

Mr. M. N. CAMPBELL (Mackenzie): I am not quite so modest as either the hon. member for Humboldt (Mr. Stewart) or the hon. member for Nelson (Mr. Bird); I have no apologies whatever to offer for taking up the time of the House at this hour of the morning. We made repeated attempts throughout the session to bring the matter to the attention of the government and of hon. members and have not succeeded in doing so. A resolution was placed on the order paper early in the session but we could not secure an opportunity of debating it; and the government abandoned private members' day too soon to permit of the matter being taken up. It is to be regretted that we have had to take this rather drastic method of bringing it before the House but the fault is not ours and I for one have no apologies to offer.

Mr. GRAHAM: It could have been brought up on motion to go into supply at any time.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Mackenzie): Lately the government has not been going into supply until very late at night or in the early morning.

Mr. GRAHAM: The estimates must be taken up on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday before they can be gone into on Thursday or Friday without a motion, and every estimate

which has been before the House has provided a means of discussing this subject.

Mr. CAMPBELL: At any rate it has been the desire of hon. gentlemen interested in this matter to avoid if possible the present drastic step. We have been in hopes right along that some other means would be available but it seems that we were doomed to disappointment. On the other hand, we have been waiting for some pronouncement from the government as to what their intention is but so far they have not stated their policy. Under the circumstances the present debate is unavoidable.

I do not want to enter into a general discussion of the feasibility of the Hudson Bay route; I considered that this was settled many years ago, if the reports of the navigators and the engineers and explorers who have been employed by the Dominion government are to be relied upon. Our archives are bursting with technical information secured at a large public expense; our Hansards contain thousands of pages of brilliant speeches setting forth the many advantages to be derived from the opening of the route; ministers and deputies have journeyed to the bay and have returned enthused over the proposition. On the strength of such information the construction of the road was undertaken;

and if, as its opponents claim, these reports are not to be relied upon, then there is neither political nor commercial honour in Canada. The Speech from the Throne at the opening of the session contained the following paragraph:

Every effort will be made still further to develop the policy of Canadian trade via Canadian ports.

Had the Prime Minister the port of Nelson in mind when he penned that statement? I venture to suggest he had not; nothing was further from his mind. And yet this port means as much to the prairies as does Halifax to Nova Scotia, or St. John to New Brunswick or Quebec to the Eastern Township. I want to make a suggestion to the government as to the way in which one of these ports may be developed: remove the artificial disabilities under which the port of Quebec suffers and do away with the discrimination against grain passing through that centre and the port will develop automatically.

I am not going to discuss in any general way the various farming problems with which we have to cope, as the rules of the House oblige me to confine myself to the resolution. Transportation costs and markets are, however, generally asserted to be two of our greatest problems and it will be interesting to quote some of the figures in this regard. At the present time it costs from \$40 to \$44 to ship a steer from Winnipeg to Liverpool. Although there is no limit to what we can produce in western Canada, it is impossible for us to continue to pay such high transportation costs and produce beef for the British market.

When Canadian farmers try to attach some responsibility for these adverse conditions to our political and commercial institutions, they are generally told that these conditions exist because our customers in Great Britain and on the Continent are unable to buy our products. That such is not altogether the case is made abundantly clear by a perusal of the following trade figures. The United Kingdom imported for home consumption in 1921, 3,523,000 hundredweight of butter, in 1922, 4,268,000, and in 1923, 5,125,000. An analysis of these figures shows that the imports in 1922 were 31 per cent over those of 1921, and those of 1923 were 20 per cent over those of 1922. Cheese shows about the same consumption in 1923 as in 1921; that is, there is no falling off. Eggs show a heavy increase, the figures quoted in hundreds being, 1922, 13,661,000, and in 1923, 20,048,000. These figures show that Great Britain imported for home consumption in 1922, 30

per cent over the amount imported in 1921, and in 1923, 47 per cent over the amount of 1922. The total of meat imported—exclusive of poultry and game—was 1,746,000 tons, an increase of 18 per cent over 1922. Imports of bacon and hams from Canada in 1923 increased over 1922, but the quantity was very small and less than that for 1921; and we supplied only 10 per cent of the total British imports.

While Great Britain has been steadily increasing her importation and consumption of these various farm products, Canada has been steadily losing out in that market. Our exports of butter to the United Kingdom for 1923 were 4,365,000 pounds, as against 17,527,000 pounds in 1922. Our total of butter exports to all countries was 13,173,000 pounds in 1923, as against 21,504,000 pounds in 1922. In the face of a heavy decrease of Canadian butter sales in the British market in 1923, the Argentine, New Zealand, The Netherlands and Denmark all made heavy increases. In eggs our exports dropped 25 per cent in the face of increases by Denmark of 18 per cent and The Netherlands of 120 per cent. Of the enormous importations of chilled and frozen meat into the British market Canada does not share at all, New Zealand, the Argentine and Australia supplying the greater part. In the face of decreasing exports our home production of butter has steadily increased, the greatest expansion of the dairy industry having taken place in western Canada. The province of Saskatchewan produced 7,030,000 pounds of creamery butter in 1921, 8,991,000 pounds in 1922, and 10,867,000 pounds in 1923.

Politicians and prominent business men are perpetually advising the western farmers to go into mixed farming as a cure for all their troubles. This is giving gratuitous advice to the Canadian farmer, as Sir Wilfrid Laurier once expressed it. I maintain that the western farmers have adopted mixed farming to a degree almost beyond the point of safety, and that it will be impossible for us to continue to expand in this direction unless we secure a substantial reduction in transportation costs. As evidence of over-production of mixed farm products, in the middle of March eggs sold on the prairies at from 13 to 15 cents a dozen. New Zealand has almost completely captured the British butter market, for the very good reason that New Zealand butter can be delivered in Liverpool to-day at a very much lower cost than from western Canada, notwithstanding the fact that the distance from New Zealand is more than double that from western Canada.

The Hudson Bay route offers the only solution for the marketing of our surplus cattle and dairy products. With it completed we may look with hope and confidence to the future; without it no further expansion of these industries can take place. The northern portion of the prairie provinces are the parts most suitable for mixed farming, and the Hudson bay is its natural outlet for Europe. I do not claim that the route will handle all our grain, the most zealous advocate of the project in western Canada does not so contend that. But I do claim that in addition to being the natural outlet, particularly for our cattle and dairy products, it will provide competition which will be more effectual in settling rates on the Great Lakes than any legislation which this House may pass.

Expenditure on the route is being opposed on the ground of economy. Perhaps no more absurd argument could be used when it is borne in mind that last year this House voted twelve million dollars for construction work on the Welland ship canal, and only \$350,000 for salvage work—not construction work—on the Hudson Bay railway, of which amount only one-third was actually spent. At the beginning of the session the Speech from the Throne contained the following interesting observation:

The further development of our magnificent inland water transportation routes, which will result in lower carrying charges for the products of the farms of the West as well as for the products of the mine, the forest, and the diversified industries of the East, is of vital importance. To aid in the accomplishment of this purpose work on the new Welland ship canal is being expedited.

These words bring to my mind the famous saying of Talleyrand, that language is given us to conceal our thoughts. Surely, Sir, the Prime Minister does not think the farmers of western Canada are so gullible as to believe that the completion of the Welland ship canal will result in any appreciable reduction of the transportation charges on grain. If as this reference in the Speech from the Throne implied, the construction of the Welland ship canal was undertaken for the benefit of western Canada, surely their wishes and opinions in such a serious matter are worthy of consideration, the farmers of western Canada have asked for the Hudson Bay railway and have been given the Welland canal; they have asked for bread and have been given a stone; they have asked for fish and have been given a serpent. The money to complete the railway was raised by the sale of our own lands; none of it was raised by taxation; and yet eastern newspapers and business interests

are opposing completion of the railway on the ground of economy!

The hon. member for South Oxford (Mr. Sutherland) seemed to deplore the fact that to-day there is talk of secession in western Canada. It is only too regrettable that such is the case; but the fault is perhaps not primarily with the people of western Canada. I have before me a number of resolutions from various public bodies in my constituency urging the immediate completion of the road, several of these, in view of continued eastern opposition to the project, placing themselves on record as favouring secession as an alternative. The same note was sounded in the Saskatchewan legislature during the last session—and mark you, by a Liberal member. These are not the impassioned utterances of demagoguery, they are the sober and reasoned judgment of sane men, but of men who feel themselves being driven by the impelling force of economic injustice to undertake any means that may be necessary to preserve to themselves the sanctity of rights—rights guaranteed to them by divine and moral laws, but refused them by their fellowmen. The danger is so great that some of these times some man with an eloquent tongue, without scruples and with no particular desire to preserve unity in Canada may set that whole country in a tumult. And if that day comes—I want hon. members to mark this—the fault will not be that of the people of western Canada. There has lately been a new note introduced into our journalistic, our political and our commercial life: they call it national unity. It is a favorite theme for newspaper discussion. It figures very largely in Canadian Club speeches. Cabinet ministers out in the country frequently refer to it. The hon. Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) paid a visit to the West last summer. We were glad to see him, and I want to say that no minister of the Crown has more friends in western Canada than the Minister of Justice. I take this opportunity of thanking him for the many kind words he addressed to us on that occasion. He had also a good deal to say about national unity and of the necessity for maintaining the spirit of good-will between the East and the West. Now, why is all this talk of national unity necessary? Is it not simply because from one end of this country to the other, from Halifax to Vancouver, we realize that there are growing up influences that are destroying that unity, that no such thing as national unity exists in Canada? That this feeling does prevail there is no stronger confirmation than is contained in a paragraph in the Speech from the Throne this session, which reads:

National unity, not less than national prosperity, depends upon the surmounting of those barriers which have tended to separate western from eastern Canada and to discourage permanent settlement upon the land.

Surely, Sir, it should not be necessary to emphasize the necessity for maintaining a spirit of goodwill between the East and the West. But when last year this House voted nearly \$12,000,000 for construction work on the Welland-Ship canal without one word of protest from the businessmen and newspapers of eastern Canada, and when such violent journalistic opposition developed, as it did last year, to the voting of \$350,000 for salvage work on the Hudson Bay railway, it is not to be wondered at that goodwill between the East and the West is being strained to the breaking point. If this government really mean what they say in the Speech from the Throne; if they want to remove this haunting suspicion from the minds of the people of western Canada; if they really want to do justice, let them spend the necessary amount to complete this railway to the bay and give us some tangible proof of their desire for national unity. I want to make it clear that no other heavy expenditures are being advocated at the present time. The western people are satisfied to permit the project to justify itself once the railway is completed to the bay.

Now, Sir, I wish to state that anything I have said or anything I intend to say is in all kindness to the hon. Minister of Railways (Mr. Graham). I believe it is generally recognized in the West that the Minister of Railways himself has always been a friend of the project and I believe that if he had a free hand in the matter this debate to-day would be unnecessary. We are not here as humble suppliants seeking favours from this House. We are not here doffing our caps in the presence of powerful business interests that seem to have had the ear of all our governments, business interests that oppose this project not because they think it is not feasible but because they fear that it is. We are not asking for a privilege; we are asking for what is a matter of right. It is our own money that has gone into it; none of it is raised by taxation. The newspaper propaganda that has taken place has been based on narrow sectionalism. If the government permits its hands to be tied then we must consider this reference in the Speech from the Throne to national unity as just so much camouflage and irony. I consider, Sir, that the time has come for plain speaking with regard to this undertaking. For forty years the people of western Canada have waited for the consummation of their hopes; for forty years the Hudson Bay railway has been dangled be-

fore their eyes at election time, only to recede into the mists of obscurity after the polling had taken place. Year after year hope has been raised by the advent of the construction gang, but the Hudson Bay still beckons from the distance, it still eludes our grasp. What we are waiting for is a clear enunciation of policy on the part of the government. So far as I am concerned I will be frank and say that I would a thousand times prefer that the government should come out clearly and definitely as abandoning the whole project rather than that they should continue as they are doing to-day. Anything is preferable to the present policy—a policy like that of the mule on the treadmill, plenty of expended energy but no advancement; the spending of a little money here and a little money there, lifting a few ties out of the mud here and putting in a little ballast there.

Montreal is opposed to the project; all the newspaper interests of Montreal are opposed to it, and why? Is it not because Montreal is afraid that it is feasible and that some of our grain will go out over that route instead of coming down and going through Montreal?

Mr. MARLER: My hon. friend is now talking very airy nonsense. Montreal has no fear whatsoever of developing any other port. If the Hudson Bay route is feasible Montreal will be the first to fall in with the ideas of the people in the West. We are not afraid of any other port being developed; on the contrary we want to see every other port in Canada developed. We have not taken the same selfish attitude in Montreal that my hon. friend is taking now, nor do we issue threats.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I am glad to have the assurance of the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Marler), but the newspaper reports that come from there and the statements of businessmen in that city do not bear out what he has to say. In spite of what he says I still believe that the atmosphere of Montreal is opposed to the Hudson Bay railway.

Mr. MARLER: The atmosphere of Montreal is opposed to the Hudson Bay railway, it is quite true, but it is not opposed to any feasible or any reasonable scheme. Let my hon. friend not misunderstand my remarks.

Mr. CAMPBELL: A great deal has been said about the responsibility of the provincial governments with regard to this project. When Ontario built its railway into the northland it was appreciating the value of its own holdings. Put us in the same position as Ontario and we will not be asking you for

votes of money to build this railway. I know hon. gentlemen will say, "Oh, but you get a subsidy in lieu of your natural resources." That was true up to 1912, but in that year the boundary of Quebec was extended to the shores of Hudson strait; the boundary of Ontario was extended to the shores of Hudson bay; the boundaries of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta were moved northward. But there was this difference: while an empire rich in resources, rich in minerals, pulpwood and water-power was added as a free gift to Quebec and Ontario, so far as the prairie provinces were concerned the additions were simply a line on the map, because the Dominion government retained all the resources. Put us on an equal basis with the eastern provinces, give us the territory that was added in 1912 and we will build the railway ourselves. We are not asking for any privileges. My hon. friends in the province of Quebec are all opposed to it. I think they are largely influenced from Montreal. The press of Montreal are opposed to it, and that has influenced to a large extent the province of Quebec. I would like to ask some of our Quebec friends what Montreal has done to their own port? Is it not the influence of Montreal that is preventing our using the port of Quebec? There is a prohibitory rate on grain and other products going to Quebec to-day. I intend to deal with that on a later occasion if I get an opportunity. I shall not go into it fully now. But it seems to me there is ample proof that it is the Montreal influences that are preventing the use of that port to-day. If the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George feels as he expressed himself toward the other ports, I would like to see him support me in trying to secure a reduction of grain rates to the port of Quebec, and to bring about the establishment of a rate that would be in line with the prairie rate, or what are known as the Crowsnest rates.

Mr. MARLER: I know nothing whatever about grain rates, nor does my hon. friend. That is in the hands of the Railway Commission.

Mr. CAMPBELL: It is a remarkable thing that the Railway Commission should establish rates that are almost double those prevailing on the prairie to-day. There are some influences working somewhere. There is

something wrong with the Railway Commission or there are other influences.

A good deal has been said about the report of Engineer MacLachlan. It has been fairly well dealt with already, but I just want to point out one or two facts in connection with it. Engineer MacLachlan was retained on that work a year after he had sent in the unfavourable report that we have heard so much about. It does not appear that the department took this report seriously. They continued him on the work for another year and spent a great deal of money on the enterprise after he had sent in his report. It seems to me that it is very difficult to get unbiased reports on the Hudson Bay railway. If an engineer at the beginning of his career wants to damn his professional prospects there is no way in which he can do it so effectively as by coming out in support of the Hudson Bay railway. That is proven in one or two cases. But here and there we will find some man with moral courage who comes out and says what he thinks. Mr. Cowie, who I believe is in the employ of the Montreal Harbour Commission, is a man of that type. A year ago he made a public statement to the effect that there were no obstacles in the way of the Hudson Bay route that had not already been overcome on the St. Lawrence route, and there was a great outcry from various interests in the city of Montreal asking that Mr. Cowie be discharged from his position. Did that show a broad minded spirit?

Mr. MARLER: That is an absolutely inaccurate statement.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I read statements in several newspapers to that effect stating that demands were presented from various parties asking for his position.

Mr. MARLER: He was not chief engineer of the Montreal Harbour Commission when he read the paper my hon. friend referred to.

Mr. CAMPBELL: Then I stand corrected. At any rate it seems a very difficult matter to get a fair and unbiased report on this project. I hope the government will give the assurance that they are going to do something or else definitely abandon it. For my part if the government are not going to complete the railway I do not want to see any more money spent on it. Either they should abandon the project altogether or announce that they are going to complete it.